

*Map Exercise*

Using other sources, locate the following sites on the above map: Crete, Knossos, Mycenae, the Peloponnesus, Greece, Troy, Anatolia, Macedonia, and the Aegean Sea. Also, locate the Mycenaean cities of Tiryns and Pylos. The island of Crete is the fifth largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. Name and locate the other four larger islands of the Mediterranean.

# THE EARLY GREEKS

The first important civilization in the Mediterranean Sea was the Minoan, centered at Knossos, on the island of Crete. The wealthy Minoans, who probably didn't speak Greek, traded with Syria, Egypt and the Greek mainland and the later Mycenaeans learned a lot from their culture.

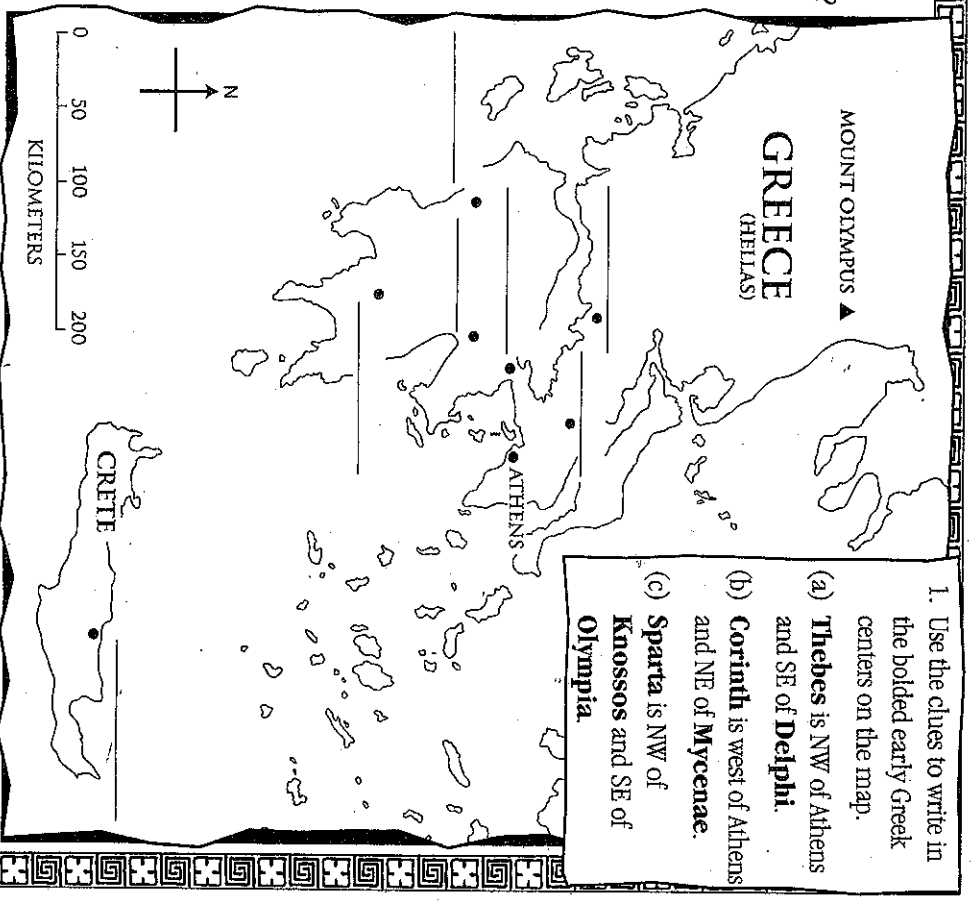
The first prosperous ancient Greek civilization on the mainland was around 1500 B.C. and centered on the city of Mycenae. The original Mycenaeans were tribes of warlike, chariot-riding herdsmen who had swept down from northern Europe centuries before. In time, they built separate small kingdoms, traded with neighbors and developed a written language. Mycenae became the richest and most powerful city in Ancient Greece until around 1150 B.C. when the Mycenaean kingdoms were overrun by the Dorians, other invaders from northern Greece whose main city became Sparta.

The Dorians spoke a kind of Greek but knew nothing about reading and writing and the Greek civilization went into decline for several centuries.

Many areas of mainland Greece consisted of mountains and deep valleys. Over the centuries, city-states, large and small, developed but had little contact because of the terrain, except when involved in wars between cities, especially Athens and Sparta. There was no country called Greece (the ancient Greeks called it Hellas—"the place with a Greek way of life") but the inhabitants spoke Greek and each city-state controlled the land around it and made its own laws. As Athens, Sparta and other Greek cities like Corinth and Thebes grew larger and more important, Greek settlements began to develop in southern Italy and North Africa in cities like Alexandria, Gyrene and Syracuse, and Marseilles in France.

## Activity Box

- Why did people of the mainland city-states have little contact with each other?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How did the Dorians help the Greek civilization of the time to decline?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- The inhabitants of which two cities were fierce enemies?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Around which year did the Dorians invade southern Greece?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What is the approximate distance from Athens to Sparta?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Where was the first important Mediterranean civilization?



- Which word tells us the Minoans became very rich (through trade)?